

Press Release

Muratcentoventidue Artecontemporanea

Mountains

Janet Biggs, Rikke Flensberg, Chrischa Venus Oswald, Helena Wittmann

Galleria Muratcentoventidue Artecontemporanea is pleased to present *Mountains*, a group exhibition featuring works by Janet Biggs, Rikke Flensberg, Chrischa Venus Oswald and Helena Wittmann.

The mountain is not only a natural element, it is at the same time, a different place, that has always exercised a great fascination. It is as if the extreme altitude opened to infinite horizons beyond the limits of ordinary reality, beyond the confines of the same universe.

Through photography and video installation, the exhibition presents the mountain as a place stimulating the artistic research and creates a narration that invites the viewer to confront it.

Janet Biggs is an American artist, known primarily for her work in video, photography and performance. She lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. Biggs' work often includes images of individuals in extreme landscapes or situations. She has captured such events as speeding motorcycles on the Bonneville Salt Flats, Olympic synchronized swimmers in their attempts to defy gravity, kayaks performing a synchronized ballet in Arctic waters, sulfur miners inside an active volcano, and a camel caravan crossing the Taklamakan desert of Western China.

Her earlier work dealt with issues of psychosis and psychotropic drugs. Her latest project explores the creation and loss of memory from personal, physical, and scientific perspectives. In addition to videos, her recent work includes multi-discipline performances, often including multiple large-scale videos, live musicians, and athletes.

In the video shown in this exhibition Biggs explores the duality of situations – a complex intertwining of freedom and constraint, excellence and frailty, strength and solitude, the complexity of humanity.

To make a mark, “to shoot” in this world as in *Warning Shot*: while Janet Biggs admires the infinite possibilities of nature, she is aware that our human actions, willingly or not, disrupt nature’s harmony.

Rikke Flensberg is a Danish artist, known primarily for her work in video and photography. She operates in the minimalistic field using both a concrete and abstract expression.

In her works “If A Universe Can Be Imagined, It Exists” manipulating photos, animation and sound artist she created a dreamlike world.

Flensberg’s works with notions of the subjective versus the objective as a vehicle for the imaginary. By manipulating photo, sound and animation she attempts to conceive a new space, where an entirely subjective existence is possible, and realized to the extent it has been imagined. Human beings, in her view, become disenfranchised from their imagination through the external production of our everyday existence, and therefore they have become incapable of believing in other places or better things. They are caught up in and appeased by our physical beings, and they are reluctant to question this.

Rikke Flensberg looks at the imaginary not only as a utopian landscape, but also as a dystopian paradigm. It destroys as much as it creates, but has to be acknowledged, along with its contradictions, to bring about a realistic communication between individuals, strangers and other beings – to make something different possible.

The work of German artist **Chrischa Venus Oswald** includes various disciplines, for example photography, video/performances or poetry – the choice of her particular medium depending on the concept. Oswald's work is interested in both performative and documentary approaches and is primarily dealing with relationships, the human condition and existential issues.

Ancient or popular stories and motifs, that are vehicles for topics of deeply human interest, are thus part of her research and investigation while her actual environment is a source for observation in regard to relationships and behavior in different social groups and spaces.

In her photographs entitled "*Can't Escape*" the artist reflects on the fact that landscape has a long tradition in art history but is also an abundantly photographed motif in the world of (amateur) photographers and finally contributes to a vast digital landscape. Therefore nature is often rather perceived „second hand“ or through the viewfinder instead of directly contemplated and experienced.

"*Can't Escape*" is discussing the desire for nature (which is also why people attempt to catch nature/landscape) as well as the excessive visual overload that is created this way. Oswald made a suit of photos tagged as mountain-landscapes she found online to give the pictures a physical body again – with the aim to afterwards "embed" a spectator in this suit of images and transplant him into a real mountain-landscape to ask questions about different states and layers of a picture, about transformation and the role of man in relation to it.

Oswald's video-performance *MMXVI (2017)* is loosely connected to her earlier work *MMXIII (2013)* which is dealing with themes like ritual, nature, virginity, fertility, creation, death and birth, women and goddess.

MMXVII is speaking about themes like fertility, nature, creation and ritual as well though in a more mature way that is addressing the theme of harvest. The setting resembles an altar or a mountain – both places where offerings are made that are connected to cults and myths. Also the special type of a mountain, the vulcano, is strongly associated with diverging meaning. Thus the performance is fertile soil to seduce the viewer's imagination and to make the audience reflect on womankind and the potential of creation.

Helena Wittmann lives in Hamburg and works with different media, mainly film and video. In her videos and within her artistic practice, rooms constitute much more than just bare venues of a storyline. She questions and contextualizes the boundaries of these rooms, in them, with them, on them and along them.

Using fewer parameters, she often creates a starting situation like a study: a room, an interior, a certain space, a defined camera setting. Also the decision for her medium, being video or film, is a strict setting. In many works, Wittmann is interested in what penetrates the inside from the outside and what exactly defines a space: light, noise, directions, people. Above all, the subtly composed sound level is of great importance. The subject of her current works is the spatial perception of the ocean. The new works are developed in close collaboration with anthropologist Theresa George and sound artist Nika Breithaupt.

The setting of "*Later*", one of her earlier videos, is Quixada in Brazil. The sun goes down and the darkness reveals its fine layers of light on the last mountain to fall into darkness. The light continues inside it. While the day turns into night, the cadence in the video remains the same. The image though, is ever shifting. The

relation between foreground and background is being altered by the fog and the transition of light. Darkness is not only the absence of light in vision. It is clearly audible.

A special thank to the Cristin Tierney Gallery , New York, NY.

Venue

Muratcentoventidue-Artecontemporanea
Via G. Murat 122/b – Bari (Italy)
Opening
Saturday February 11th, 2017 at 7.30 pm

Period

February 11 – March 31 2017

Opening hours

from Tuesday to Saturday, from 5.00 to 8.00 pm

Info

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Education/ Exhibions / Screenings

Janet Biggs is an American artist. She lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. Biggs received her undergraduate degree from Moore College of Art, and pursued graduate studies at Rhode Island School of Design.

She has had solo exhibitions and film screenings at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden; the Armory Art Fair; Tampa Museum of Art; Skulpturenmuseum Glaskasten Marl; Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art; Mint Museum of Art; Everson Museum of Art; Gibbes Museum of Art; Rhode Island School of Design Museum; and the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, Australia; among others.

Her work has been featured in the first International Biennial of Contemporary Art of Cartagena, Colombia; the Musée d'art contemporain de Lyon, France; Vantaa Art Museum, Finland; Linköpings Konsthall, Passagen, Sweden; the Oberösterreichisches Landesmuseum, Austria; Kunstmuseum Bonn, Germany; Museo d'arte contemporanea Roma, Italy; and the National Taiwan Museum of Fine Arts, Taiwan.

Reviews of her work have appeared in the *New York Times*, *the New Yorker*, *ArtForum*, *ARTNews*, *Art in America*, *Flash Art*, *Artnet.com*, and many others.

Biggs is the recipient of numerous grants including the Electronic Media and Film Program at the New York State Council on the Arts Award, the Arctic Circle Fellowship/Residency, Art Matters, Inc., the Wexner Center Media Arts Program Residency, the Anonymous Was a Woman Award, and the NEA Fellowship Award.

Her work is in collections including Fonds Régional d'Art Contemporain (FRAC), Languedoc-Roussillon, France; the Zabludowicz Collection, London; Skulpturenmuseum Glaskasten Marl (Ruhr Kunst Museen), Marl, Germany; the Tampa Museum of Art, Tampa, FL; the High Museum, Atlanta, GA; the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY; Mint Museum of Art, Charlotte, NC; the Gibbes Museum of Art, Charleston, NC.; and the New Britain Museum of Art, New Britain, Connecticut.

Janet Biggs works with Cristin Tierney Gallery, New York City, CONNERSMITH, Washington, DC, Analix Forever, Geneva, Switzerland, and Galerie Anita Beckers (Blink Video Art), Frankfurt, Germany.

Rikke Flensberg lives and works in Copenhagen, Denmark.

She studied at Malmö Art Academy in Sweden.

Flensberg is the recipient of numerous grants including The Danish Art Council, Residency grant (2015), The Danish Art Council production grant (2011-2014-2015), The Danish art Council Working grant (2012), The Nordic Culture Point, Mobility support 2012.

Among her group shows and video festival: Projekt Imago Mundi, Benetton Foundation./ videokunsthøst Nikolaj Kunsthal (DK) Open House 1-dags-kunsthøst B-Huset HC. Ørstedesvej 65 (DK) " Absence in Presence " Halmlageret Ny Carlsberg, (group exhibition) Copenhagen.

Among her solo show : DARK " BABEL Visningsrom for Kunst / Trondheim (NO) 2015; Parallel Perception " Galleria Muratcentoventidue Artecontemporanea Bari (ITALY) 2014; " Life is Beautiful, Full of Illusions and Lies " Green Is Gold Studio GIG CPH (DK) 2012.

Chrischa Venus Oswald is a German artist, born in Bavaria in 1984 , currently mostly living and working in Berlin and Lisbon.

She finished her Fine Arts studies at the University of Art and Design in Linz (A) with a diploma with honour in 2011.

In 2007 she was awarded the Diesel New Art Award Austria for Photography – whose jury also included artist Erwin Wurm. Her work got exhibited and screened in various national as well as international shows and is included in private collections, amongst others the video collection of Manuel de Santaren.

Her videos were selected also for Proyector Videoart Festival, Madrid (ES), in the FUSO Videoart-Festival, MAAT, Lisboa (PT), Femmes' Video Art Festival 2, LACE, Los Angeles (US), extra — experimental trails« - Festival für experimentelle Film- und Videokunst, d21, Leipzig and 2nd OZON International Video Art Festival, Katowice, Poland.

She exhibited in 2012 "The Eye of the Collector" Selected works of the Manuel De Santaren Collection, Villa delle Rose (MAMbo), Bologna and in 2014 in "Family Matters" with Sophie Calle, Nan Goldin, Hans Op de Beeck, Thomas Struth, Jim Campbell, John Clang, Guy Ben-Ner, Courtney Kessel, Ottonella Mocellin+Nicola Pellegrini, Trish Morrissette Palazzo Strozzi, Firenze.

Helena Wittmann was born 1982 in Neuss, Germany . She lives and works in Hamburg, Germany.

Originally studying Spanish and Media Studies at Friedrich-Alexander-University Erlangen and University of Hamburg she went on to attend the Academy of Fine Arts in Hamburg (HFBK) between 2007 – 2014.

She is currently working as artistic research assistant at the Academy of Fine Arts in Hamburg (HFBK).

Wittmann is the recipient of numerous grants between 2013 and 2015: Travel grant Neue Kunst in Hamburg, Hamburger Arbeitsstipendium für bildende Kunst (Working grant for Fine Arts, Hamburg), Karl H. Ditze Award, HFBK-Award Hamburgische Kulturstiftung for 21,3°C, Main Award Experiment (Int. Shortfilmfestival Flensburg) for WILDNIS

(THE WILD), Scholarship Studienstiftung des deutschen Volkes (German National Academic Foundation), Project Funding for WILDNIS (THE WILD) by Freundeskreis der HfbK Hamburg.

Among her latest exhibition: "LichtSpielRaum", AKKU, Stuttgart "Incertitudes", Goethe Institut Marseille, France "New Talents Biennale Cologne", Cologne "Komma", Kunstverein Springhornhof, Neuenkirchen "Kinship", Kunstverein Harburger Bahnhof, Hamburg, "Beyond The Surface", Laborneunzehn, Berlin "Films about Somewhere", Galerie Schneeeule, Berlin FICIC Festival Internacional de Cine Independiente de Cosquín, Argentina "The Darkness Collection", Circulo de Bellas Artes, Madrid, Spain "Your Skin Makes Me Cry", Kuandu Museum of Fine Arts, Taipei, Taiwan "Incertitudes", Goethe Institut Paris, France "New German Video Art", Alternative Space, Seoul, Corea "Your Skin Makes Me Cry", Goethe Institut Chicago, Chicago, USA "The Darkness Collection", Punto de Vista Filmfestival, Pamplona, Spain.